

***Managing Compassion Fatigue: A Self-Care Guidebook for Helping Professionals***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

Compassion fatigue, a phenomenon observed among helping professionals, is the combination of burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Adams, Figley, & Boscarino, 2008). The literature recommends that helping professionals can prevent or manage compassion fatigue by building resilience through self-care habits (Barnett & Ruiz, 2018; Craigie et al., 2016; Cuartero & Campos-Vidal, 2019; Silver, Caleshu, Casson-Parkin, & Ormond, 2018; Train & Butler, 2013). This guidebook seeks to raise helping professionals' awareness of compassion fatigue, their risk for it, and self-care strategies to be resilient against it. It contains three main parts: the Preparation Cycle, an educational section about compassion fatigue; the Guided Activity Cycles, interactive activities that introduce users to self-care strategies and guide them to put the strategies into practice; and the Reflection Cycle, an interactive section that prompts users to evaluate their overall experience and create self-care goals for themselves. In essence, this tool teaches a variety of self-care practices and then encourage the user to carry the practices that resonated most with them into their life in an individualized way.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank a few individuals who have been my support system throughout the creation of this guidebook. First, my senior Honors thesis advisor, Sarah, who taught me the word compassion fatigue when I told her my hopes for a creative senior thesis that would benefit helping professionals. By giving me a name for the phenomenon I had long observed in others and feared I would soon see in myself, she made it a surmountable adversary. The whole of my work has built upon this initial word that, once known, empowered me to take action. I would also like to thank my writing center tutor, Emma, whose weekly meetings and unwavering excitement kept me sane during this lengthy project.

Next, I would like to thank my parents, whose support during my degree has made it possible for me to do all kinds of cool things, especially take extra classes from the Honors College. In regard to this project, I would like to acknowledge my mom, in particular, who kept me accountable while I was working on the literature review that preceded this guidebook and who has constantly reminded me how important the work I'm doing is.

I would like to thank my boyfriend, Chandler, and my friend, Rita, who have seen me through many stressful days (only some of which were related to this guidebook). I would also like to thank The Caffeinery and Queer Chocolatier, which were both productive workspaces for me before COVID-19 and the shelter in place orders brought us all a new reality.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my late grandmother, a former nurse and the helping professional whose struggles sparked my interest in this problem in the first place. May we all learn to care for ourselves as deeply as she cared for others.

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## Process Analysis Statement

For my Honors Thesis, I wanted to create something to help those helping professionals who are weighed down by the emotional labor of caring for others. I have seen some of the most dedicated helping professionals eventually become burnt out or jaded because they struggle to care for themselves. As a future helping professional myself, I have often worried about my ability to take care of my mental health and well-being once I enter my field. When I spoke to Sarah Gremer, who would later become my thesis advisor, about this, she told me the phenomenon I was observing and concerned about was called compassion fatigue.

During the Fall 2019 semester, I completed a literature review on interventions against compassion fatigue as my semester project for a research methods course. I have included this literature review in the Appendix. The conclusion drawn from this research—that self-care practices are recommended for preventing and managing compassion fatigue—became the foundation for my guidebook, *Managing Compassion Fatigue: A Self-Care Guidebook for Helping Professionals*. I chose to create a guidebook as my innovative intervention against compassion fatigue because an intervention in this form is more widely accessible than the interventions I reviewed in the literature. In making the guidebook both a self-help and self-care tool, it is an approachable way for helping professionals to begin helping themselves.

I was inspired by the works of Françoise Mathieu and seminal compassion fatigue researcher Charles Figley when designing self-care activities for this guidebook. As many of the symptoms of compassion fatigue are common targets of therapy, the activities I chose are also inspired by and adapted from strategies commonly used in therapy. Many of these strategies, however, have not been studied specifically in regard to compassion fatigue. Thus, the basis for the self-care theme is evidence-based while the specifics within the guidebook are evidence-

inspired. The written thesis included in this manuscript is the written content of my guidebook. If the guidebook were to be printed/published for use, it would benefit from the addition of graphic design elements where referenced, QR codes where there are currently hyperlinks, and lined pages where the guidebook asks the user to write.

The process of creating this guidebook was challenging for me, as it is the largest and most ongoing project I have ever taken on. I learned that I am capable of working in small chunks over a long period of time (not just in one giant, procrastination-induced push), but that the need for a big push at the end of a long process is okay, too, and does not mean that the ongoing work wasn't enough. I also learned that I do best when I ask others to keep me accountable with small deadlines along the way. What I learned about myself through this project gives me hope for my master's thesis and other projects in my future career. However, in some ways I feel that I have yet to experience my normal working habits during the full process of a project this large because the COVID-19 pandemic certainly affected the nature of my habits, both by freeing up time to work and by making it more difficult to focus on doing so. At times, the present crisis reminded me just how important my present work is, but, more often, it left me feeling that what I can offer pales in comparison to what our world's helping professionals (especially those working essential healthcare jobs right now) need.

In coping with this and the interrupted nature of my work habits, I have tried to focus on self-compassion rather than self-criticism. The process of writing the guidebook helped me to see just how deeply I wish for others to have compassion toward themselves while still struggling to do so myself. I hope that those who may someday benefit from my work will be guided to a similar discovery of resilience and self-compassion as I was while writing it.

## **Managing Compassion Fatigue: A Self-Care Guidebook for Helping Professionals**

By Katie Crawford

*To my grandma, my mom, and all of the amazing helping professionals who have come before me. And to you, the reader. May you grow to be a good caretaker of yourself from the experiences you will have between these pages and beyond.*

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## Part I: Preparation Cycle

### Intentions for this Guidebook

Welcome! I'm glad you're here. I would like to say that I hope this guidebook finds you well, but I recognize that a sense of being unwell be what brought you inside these pages in the first place. So, instead, I will say that I hope this guidebook leaves you better than it found you. May you do the same to it with all of the thoughts you will add.

The intention of this guidebook is to combat a problem, one that I observed anecdotally among the helping professionals in my own life long before I knew it had a name or discovered that it was a topic of research. This problem is compassion fatigue, which is a combination of burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Adams et al., 2008). Helping professionals, like yourself, are at risk for compassion fatigue because of the nature of their work. Their work environments are often stressful and demanding which leads to burnout, and their jobs are inherently relational, exposing them to stories of others traumas which can lead to secondary traumatic stress (Gallagher, 2013). Opposite to burnout and secondary traumatic stress is compassion satisfaction, which encompasses the positive emotions helping professionals experience as a result of their work helping others and can be protective against compassion fatigue (Zhang, Zhang, Han, Li, & Wang, 2018).

Compassion fatigue is a concern because it can lead to a variety of negative consequences such as decreased feelings of compassion satisfaction (Flarity, Gentry, & Mesnikoff, 2013), decreased empathetic capacity (Coetzee & Kloppe, 2010), increased feelings of helplessness or ineffectiveness, and inappropriate disengagement/depersonalization from those you are helping (Udipi, Veatch, Kao, & LeRoy, 2008). Many studies that tested a variety of interventions against compassion fatigue came to a similar recommendation: awareness of compassion fatigue combined with increased self-care practices is a promising prevention/intervention method against the phenomenon of compassion fatigue and its negative consequences (Barnett & Ruiz, 2018; Craigie et al., 2016; Cuartero & Campos-Vidal, 2019; Silver et al., 2018; Train & Butler, 2013).

Thus, this guidebook aims to help you reduce your risk of compassion fatigue by promoting resilience through personal and professional self-care practices. Notably, the nature of this guidebook is more accessible than other efforts against compassion fatigue, most of which would require your place of employment to offer a course or other intervention in order for you to be able to get help. This guidebook, however, is something you can self-elect to use. While it may seem daunting to improve your personal and professional self-care habits on your own, guidance is provided at every step and suggestions for accountability are included. You can do it!

### Know What's to Come

Now that you understand the why of what we're doing here, let's talk a little bit about the how. Your participation in this self-care guidebook will occur in 12 cycles,\* each of which will last approximately one week depending on how you set your schedule. Don't panic, though! The guidebook is spread across this timeframe so that each individual cycle/week is not too

intensive or time consuming... The last thing I'd want to do is to make this guidebook an added stressor in your life!

The guidebook consists of a Preparation Cycle (Part I), 10 Guided Activity Cycles (Part II), and a Reflection Cycle (Part III). Part I is what you're doing right now! It's mostly reading, with a little bit of planning ahead. Next, Part II is where you will do the interactive "work" of the guidebook. Each of Part II's 10 cycles will introduce you to a new self-care strategy, guide you to try it out, and then prompt you to reflect on it. Feel free to take a moment and look over pages 10 and 11 so that you have a better idea about the structure of an average guided activity cycle. Finally, Part III is the last cycle: the overall reflection. More than just wrapping up your experience, this section will guide you to reflect on how/if the strategies you've explored are useful for you and then prompt you to set personalized self-care plan goals to work on going forward. The hope is that you will take the strategies you found most realistic and effective and incorporate them into your life on a regular basis!

\*The time divisions in the guidebook are called "cycles" rather than "weeks" because I recognize that not all helping professionals have a standard work week. The idea here is to provide flexibility so that you can make this guidebook work for you by deciding how it best fits into your schedule. Take a moment and think about your work "week." Whatever your work week may look like, the calendar on the next page will help you make a personalized timeline for using this guidebook.

## **Make a Plan**

First, bookmark this page! The calendar below is your roadmap to stay on track for the next 12 cycles. Next, grab a pencil! Feel free to use your favorite pen for the rest of the guidebook, but this page may need revisited and revised. Write today's date in the first box below to mark the beginning of Part I. Then, keeping in mind your work "week" and what you've learned about the structure of this guidebook, fill in the calendar with the dates you plan to start each cycle of Part II.\* Finally, don't forget to add a start date for Part III, the twelfth and final cycle!

**\*\* CALENDAR GOES HERE \*\***

\*I would recommend giving yourself ~7 days for each cycle during Part II. This will give you one day for the introduction and any planning it may ask you to do, four days for the activity portion of the strategy, one day dedicated to the reflection, and at least one break day before the next cycle begins. You can easily stretch each cycle to eight or more days if that fits the pattern of your schedule better, or you can condense each cycle to 5-6 days if your work "week" is more conducive to a shorter guidebook cycle.

P.S. If you fall behind throughout this process or need to revise your guidebook timeline for any reason, simply come back to this page and regroup as needed. You've got this!

## Grab a Friend

This guidebook is set up for your success (remember the calendar you just bookmarked?), but, just like with any commitment or goal, you will be more successful if you have a plan to keep yourself accountable. A powerful way to do this is to find an accountability partner. Ideally, this could be someone who completes the guidebook at the same pace as you. Then you can keep each other accountable! However, your accountability partner can simply be someone who knows you are working through this guidebook and whom you can schedule regular check-ins with.

Think of a friend, family member, or colleague who could fill either of the roles described above. Would you be willing to ask this person to be your accountability partner? Write their name here: \_\_\_\_\_. Make a commitment to contact them today or tomorrow. Tell them about the journey you are preparing to embark on, and ask them to join you either literally by getting a second copy of the guidebook or in spirit by scheduling check-ins with you.

If you would like to try additional strategies to keep yourself accountable, consider using reminders, a contract, or social media. *Reminders*: Make a routine of when you plan to work on the guidebook, and set digital reminders or alarms to help you stick to your routine. You can use your phone's clock or calendar, or you may wish to check out a variety of habit-tracking apps, some of which allow you to share your progress with your accountability partner! *Contract*: Write and sign a statement of intent as a contract with yourself. Post your contract somewhere that you will see it often! *Social media*: If you are comfortable doing so, use social media to go public with your goal. Make posts often to update your friends and followers to your progress!

Now you may be thinking, "The author will never *know* if I contact my friend!" True, I suppose, but chances are at least one person reading this either didn't write down a friend's name or did but already decided not to contact them. Caught ya! If that's YOU, maybe rethink it. I promise you'll thank me later!

## Understand Your Starting Point

One last thing before we round out Part I: Preparation Cycle. By clicking [this hyperlink](#), you will find the fifth version of the Professional Quality of Life Scale, otherwise known as the ProQOL (Stamm, 2010). While this assessment is not diagnostic, it can help you get a sense of where you are right now. Complete this self-assessment and then record your subscale scores below.

*Compassion satisfaction:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Burnout:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Secondary traumatic stress:* \_\_\_\_\_

Congratulations, you've now completed Part I! You're doing a good thing for yourself. Take a deep breath, and get ready to start Part II.

## **Part II: Guided Activity Cycles**

### **Opening Words**

Welcome back! Now that you have finished the Preparation Cycle, you are ready to move on to the “work” of the guidebook. In the following 10 Guided Activity Cycles, you will be introduced to a variety of self-care strategies.\* There are five sections (Self-Awareness, Time, Body, Mind, and Interpersonal Relations) which each contain two strategies.

Some of these strategies may resonate with you more than others, and that’s ok! Nothing in this guidebook is meant to be a one-size-fits-all solution, rather, everything you are introduced to is merely a tool that you can use and build on in a way that works best for you.

As you go through this process, I hope you will be open-minded and willing to forgive yourself if not all goes as planned. As you learn to care for yourself, you can also learn to have compassion for yourself. One missed day or week doesn’t mean it’s time to throw in the towel--it’s simply time to regroup! Strive for progress, not perfection.

\*Many of the activities in this guidebook were inspired by the work of Francoise Mathieu (Mathieu, 2007) and Charles Figley (Figley, 2012).

## Section One: Self-Awareness

*"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life  
and you will call it fate." --C.G. Jung*

Self-awareness can at times be uncomfortable, but it can also be powerful, illuminating strengths and weaknesses and offering a path forward. The two self-care strategies in this section will help you develop self-awareness about your experiences surrounding the three subscales measured by the ProQOL: burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion satisfaction.

## **Strategy One**

### ***Life Scan: Assess Your Trauma***

In Part I, you learned about compassion fatigue and the possibility that you are at risk for it. This phenomenon and its symptoms may sound familiar to you, but let's make an attempt to nail down your experience with it. The purpose of the Life Scan Strategy is to bring awareness to the specific aspects of your life that are contributing to burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Even if the ProQOL questionnaire indicated you only experience low or mild compassion fatigue, being aware of your stressors is still an important foundation for using this guidebook. Although you will be "assessing your trauma," this activity is not about taking a deep dive into your past. Instead, it is about developing an awareness of what is negatively affecting your professional well-being right now.\*

\* If this strategy (or any part of this guidebook) raises concerns about your mental health, you may wish to talk with a mental health professional. This guidebook is in no way a substitute for seeking professional help.

#### ***Day 1***

Today, start simple by just listing the current stressors in your life. Anything that may be affecting you, however big or small, write it down here. Use the boxes below to divide your list between work-related stressors and those outside of work. It may be overwhelming to see all of this in one place, but we're going to break it down over the rest of the cycle. For the moment, however, take a deep breath and leave it all here on the page until tomorrow.

#### ***Day 2***

Today, turn your attention to the "work-related" portion of the list you wrote yesterday. Determine which of the stressors on this half of the list may contribute to burnout (i.e. stressors related to the work environment), which may contribute to secondary traumatic stress (i.e. stressors related to the relational aspects of your work), and which may fall outside of these categories. Use the boxes below to sort them.

#### ***Day 3***

Today, narrow your focus to secondary traumatic stress. Read back through yesterday's list of work-related stressors that you said may contribute to secondary traumatic stress. As you think about these situations, try to put a name to how these relational aspects of your job that expose you to others' traumas affect you. As you do this exercise, try to keep your focus on your own emotions, the intensity of those emotions, and to what degree you are able to separate your own situation from that of the person you are helping. Write down some of the ways that you respond during these situations. For example, as you listen to a client talk about not having money to feed their children, your heart may begin to race and you may begin to worry thinking about what it would be like to be in your client's shoes.

\*For example, consider the experience of a dietitian who, after hearing from a client that they could not afford food for their children, began to worry about her ability to feed her own children even though her family was financially stable.

## **Day 4**

Today, refer back to the list of stressors you wrote on Day 1 of this strategy. As you read them, cross off everything beyond your control. With each stressor you mark out, focus on accepting what is out of your control and what your worries cannot solve. While recognizing that a difficulty is beyond your control does not necessarily make the stress it causes go away, crossing it off your list of worries can help you let go of it and instead channel your energy on what you do have the power to change. If you wish, copy the new list (only those stressors that are within your control) below.

## **Reflection**

At the end of each cycle, you will engage in a written reflection about each of the self-care strategies introduced in this guidebook. The purpose of these reflections is to help you bring personal meaning to each strategy. Your reflections should be feelings- and opinions-focused in regard to your subjective experience during the cycle. Questions will be provided each time to help get your thoughts flowing. Please take these reflections seriously, as they are an important part of the process. At the end of this guidebook when it is time to reflect on your overall journey and set self-care goals for the future, these reflections will help you remember what you experienced over the past 12 cycles.

After you are done writing each reflection, you will return to the first page of the reflection to write a one-sentence takeaway about each strategy and to rate it on its feasibility and helpfulness. For example, you may write, "I enjoyed the Life Scan Strategy because it was helpful to break down the stressors in my life and assess which ones are within my control," or, "I did not enjoy the Life Scan Strategy because I found the process of focusing so much on my stressors to be upsetting." When rating each strategy on its feasibility, consider whether or not the strategy was practical and if it would easily be incorporated into your life in the future. When rating each strategy on its helpfulness, consider whether or not the strategy was beneficial and if incorporating it into your life in the future would help you grow. Both the takeaway and the ratings will give you a concise snapshot of your assessment of each strategy when you reach the end of the guidebook and it is time to decide if you will use any of these self-care strategies in the future.

Now, reflect on your overall experience with the Life Scan Strategy for self-awareness. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *How did it feel to put all of your stressors down on paper? Was it overwhelming? Cathartic? Did this activity make you aware of anything you hadn't realized was bothering you? How did this activity increase your understanding of compassion fatigue as it relates to your current situation? When a patient, client, or even a coworker shares about the struggles in their life, how does this affect you as a*

*compassionate person? If they are worried about their health/ safety, does your empathy for them cross a line to undue concern for your own health/ safety or that of your family members? After exploring the concept further, do you believe you experience secondary traumatic stress? Was it beneficial to sort your stressors and try to identify the sources of negative emotions? How about the process of crossing off the things that are out of your control? How did that feel?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Life Scan Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## **Strategy Two**

### ***Value Scan: Remember Your Reason***

Everyone has a reason for choosing their career path. Helping professionals, in general, tend to choose their careers for particularly meaningful and uplifting reasons. However, during the Life Scan Strategy, you addressed day to day stressors of your work that may pull you away from the hope that initially inspired you. The purpose of the Value Scan Strategy is to explore compassion satisfaction, the positive aspect measured by the ProQOL. You will do this by delving into the reason(s) you chose to become a helping professional in the first place. Unlike the last strategy, which kept the focus to the present, the activities in this cycle will traverse the past, present, and future. You will consider past people and experiences who have influenced your career choice, how your personal qualities and values played into your decision, recent experiences in which you have felt compassion satisfaction, and role models or aspirations that continue to motivate you for the future of your career.

#### ***Day 1***

Today, reflect on the people and experiences from your past that influenced your decision to become a helping professional. Some questions to get you thinking: Is there a helping professional in your family that inspired you? Did someone help you or someone you know in a way that made a big impact on your career choice? Did you or someone you know have an experience that made you want to make a difference by becoming a helping professional? Consider writing this reflection as though it were a letter to the person(s) or experience(s) that influenced you.

#### ***Day 2***

Today, consider the personal traits and values that played a role in your decision to become a helping professional. You may also wish to consider current traits and values that make you a successful helping professional. List them in the boxes below with an explanation for each. Examples are provided. If you fill this page, another chart is provided on the next page.

#### ***Day 3***

Today, engage in some reflective writing about a recent experience (or a few experiences!) during which you felt compassion satisfaction. This could be a time you truly felt your work made a difference for someone else, a connection with a patient or client that reinvigorated your sense of purpose as a helping professional, or any other compassionate experience derived from your work that had a positive effect on *you*, not just the person you were helping. Writing about experiences such as these can help you hold on to the positive emotions they create.

### Day 4

Today, dwell on your future aspirations and goals for your career. You've explored your past reasons for entering a helping profession and a current positive experience that resonated with those reasons, but what helps you look forward to your professional future? Is there a rockstar in your field that you aspire to be like? Are there new topics to learn and challenges to face that keep you engaged? A certification you might wish to pursue? Is there something you always hoped to accomplish in your professional life that you haven't yet? List these aspirations and motivations below.

### Reflection

Reflect on your overall experience with the Value Scan Strategy for self-awareness. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *How did it feel to remember your "reason," your initial motivations for choosing your career path? What emotions did these activities bring up? Did you find that your day to day work life more often connects you to your reason or more often distracts you from it? If not, what would help you change this? Is it common for you to reflect on your experiences of compassion satisfaction as you did on Day 3? Or are you more prone to replaying negative events? How did it feel to list your aspirations for your professional future? How can you bring positivity and compassion satisfaction into your perception of your work moving forward?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Value Scan Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## Section Two: Time

*"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot." --Michael Altshuler*

You probably already know that time flies. And if you already know that time flies, you've likely spent at least some of your time saying, "I just don't have time!" While this may often be true, how you use your time says a lot about what is important to you. Consider the idea that *you* are important to you, and get curious about how this idea could impact the way you use your time. The two self-care strategies in this section will help you address time as a means to care for your well-being. They will focus on bringing intention to the division between work and play and by examining the idea of "free time" as a routine or scheduled event like the rest of your calendar.

## Strategy Three

### ***When Work Ends: Transition Routine***

Work-life balance is an important but difficult to achieve goal that can improve both your personal and professional lives. The purpose of the Transition Routine Strategy is to implement a simple routine that will help you put each work day (or night) to rest and prepare your mind to enjoy the time away from work more fully. It is possible that you already do something of this nature after work, like changing out of your work clothes, going to the gym before going home, or sitting down to have a cup of tea before doing anything else. If this is the case, during this cycle you might want to focus on bringing intention to your current transition routine or you might want to try out something new. If this is not the case, your focus for this cycle will be on experimenting with a transition routine for the first time. You will make a plan today, and then you will follow it throughout the cycle.

### ***Activity***

First, is there anything you already do when work ends that you might consider a transition routine? If so, write it down below.

Next, regardless of your answer to the question above, brainstorm some ideas for transition routines that you *might* like to try. If you like the ideas from the introduction (changing clothes, hitting the gym, etc.), go ahead and write them below. What other ideas can you come up with? Add them to the list!

Now, decide which ideas you will try out during this cycle. In the boxes provided below, write down one transition routine activity for each workday.\* An example and space for up to five workdays has been offered.

As you engage in each day's transition routine, focus on the intention behind the activity, not just the act itself. For example, if you are changing out of your work clothes, this act in and of itself serves the purpose of putting on comfortable clothes. However, the intention behind the act as a *transition routine* is to use it to signal or symbolize the physical and mental transition away from work.

\*You can use the same idea each day, but I would recommend using this opportunity to try out different ideas!

### ***Reflection***

Reflect on your overall experience with the Transition Routine Strategy. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *Did you have any degree of transition routine before this cycle introduced you to the concept? If so, how did this strategy help you to make it more meaningful? If not, how did it feel to intentionally transition between work and home? Was it helpful to do something that physically marked your exit from the workday and helped you recognize that you were free from its stressors? Is this something you would like to do every day? If you tend to have more work to do once your workday is technically over (i.e. teachers often have papers to grade once home), how can a transition routine still be helpful to you?*

*What about if you work from home?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Transition Routine Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## Strategy Four

### ***And Play Begins: Hobby Routine***

Hobbies and other interests can provide a welcome break from your field and a sense of fulfillment outside of work. You may already successfully maintain hobbies, or you may have drawers full of past interests long forgotten. (Remember that time you bought a bunch of yarn thinking you were going to learn to knit? No? Maybe that was just me.) The purpose of the Hobby Routine Strategy is to address how you use your time away from work. During this cycle, you will schedule time for an interest outside of your field, or, if you're already "good" at hobbies, you will pat yourself on the back and engage in your normal hobby routine. Taking on a new hobby or rekindling an old one may sound like a big commitment, so for the scope of this cycle, you are simply experimenting with making time for an activity that promotes "me-time" in your life. Much like the idea from the last cycle to make a habit of your transition routine, you will consider making a habit of your hobby as well-- one that is a scheduled commitment, even if it's only one hour each week! You will schedule your hobby routine today, and then you will engage in it before the end of this cycle.

### ***Activity***

Begin by brainstorming some activities that you could see yourself doing as your hobby routine. This doesn't have to be anything skillful. In fact, your hobby routine may just be taking a bath on Friday evening or grabbing your favorite book for an hour on Saturday morning! Make a list of ideas below.

This cycle is a little different from the previous three, which had you do something each day. This time, focus on the cycle as a whole unit. When are you busy, and when might you be able to free up some time? Make note of times you might be able to block out for your hobby routine below. Keep in mind that engaging in your chosen hobby and completing the Hobby Routine Reflection are the only time commitments from the guidebook this week.

Finally decide what activity you will do for your hobby routine and when you will make time to do so. I will \_\_\_\_\_ (activity) at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) on \_\_\_\_\_ (day). Commit to this plan and have fun taking a break!

### ***Reflection***

Reflect on your overall experience with the Hobby Routine Strategy. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *Do you often use your time away from work to engage in something fun like a hobby? If not, what was it like to do so this week? Was it hard to carve out time? Do you feel it is useful to "plan" free time into your schedule, or do you prefer spontaneity and taking breaks as needed? How did you feel while you were engaging in your hobby? If it was a new or rekindled hobby, do you hope to continue with it?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Hobby Routine Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## Section Three: Body

*“Good health is not something we can buy. However, it can be an extremely valuable savings account.” --Anne Wilson Schaef*

If you previously felt that self-care was all face masks, fuzzy socks, and favorite candles, hopefully this guidebook has already shown you that it's so much more (and so much less Instagram-worthy!) than that. Self-care is often messy, as it includes doing hard work on yourself, like becoming self-aware and addressing how you use your time. This hard work also extends to caring for your body and your physical health. The two self-care strategies in this section will merely scratch the surface of the important role your physical well-being plays in your overall well-being. They will guide you to examine your attitudes toward two specific areas that can promote physical health, exercise and eating habits, but these explorations could also be applied to other areas like sleep and personal hygiene.



## Strategy Five

### ***Physical Activity: Attitudes & Actions***

Being active promotes physical health, and it can also be an avenue to relieve stress. The purpose of the Physical Activity Strategy is to explore your current relationship with being active and how doing so makes you feel, both physically and mentally. There are two options for engaging with this strategy. If you currently have a physical activity routine and you are satisfied with it, you will follow Option One.\* If you do not currently have a physical activity routine or if you are unsatisfied with your current physical activity routine, you will follow Option Two. Neither option is a prescriptive physical activity routine or exercise advice, as it is not the place of this guidebook (or its author) to provide such expertise. Both options merely help you examine your attitudes and actions regarding physical activity as they currently stand.

\*Your current routine doesn't have to be anything intense like training for the Tour de France; it can be simple, like riding your bike to work. It can be any method of being active (walking, dancing, weight training, etc.) as long as you regularly do it at least once a week and are currently satisfied with your level of activity.

### ***Activity***

#### Option One

Congratulations, you have a physical activity routine that you are currently satisfied with! Since this is the case, write your routine below and complete it during this cycle as you usually would. When you are done, complete the Physical Activity Strategy reflection.\*

#### Option Two

Welcome! Since you do not currently have a physical activity routine or are unsatisfied with your current one, use this cycle to challenge yourself in one way related to being active. Maybe you used to walk or run but haven't in a while, so you go for a walk or run. Maybe you currently exercise twice a week but you would like to challenge yourself to a third workout. Keep in mind that challenging yourself does not mean overextending yourself and that you should not try anything that would be unsafe for you. Think about one positive step you could take toward a level of activeness you would be more satisfied with, write your personal physical activity challenge below, and complete it during this cycle. Once you have done so, complete the Physical Activity Strategy reflection.\*

\*If this strategy raises concerns about your physical activity habits or your relationship with exercise, you may wish to talk with an exercise professional such as an exercise physiologist.

### ***Reflection***

Reflect on your overall experience with the Physical Activity Strategy. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *What does exercise/ physical activity mean to you? What "counts" as exercise in your eyes? How important do you believe physical activity is to*

*your overall well-being? Do your actions reflect this attitude? What role does physical activity play in your life? Has it always played this role, or did it used to play a different or more/ less frequent role? How did you feel physically after being active during this cycle? How did you feel mentally? Does exercise affect your energy and/ or mood? How so? Do you look forward to being active, or is the thought of “exercise” something you dread? Has it always been this way for you? If you dread being active, what could make it more enjoyable for you? Can you reimagine what “counts” as physical activity? Finally, is being more active something that you want to work on right now, or is there another area of self-care that needs more of your focus?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Physical Activity Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

## Strategy Six

### ***Eating Habits: Health & Happiness***

In the conflict between diet culture and the “treat yo’ self” mentality, eating habits that contribute to health and those that contribute to happiness often seem to be at war. However, the old adage, “everything in moderation, including moderation” can offer a bridge between a dangerously restrictive relationship with food and an overindulgent one. Perhaps a truly balanced diet requires approaching your eating habits with a balanced mentality, one that honors both your health and your happiness. The purpose of the Eating Habits Strategy is to prompt your consideration of how your eating habits connect to both your personal health and your individual happiness. Much like the Physical Activity Strategy, this strategy is not a meal plan or nutrition advice (although the author of the guidebook *would* be qualified to give both of those). Instead, this strategy will offer a variety of fun, food-related activities for you to engage in before reflecting on your current relationship with your eating habits.

#### ***Activity***

At some point during this cycle, engage in each of the three following food-related activities. 1) Consume a meal that you consider to be healthy. 2) Enjoy your favorite food or dessert that you associate with happiness. 3) Choose at least one of these options: consume a meal without distractions (no phone, no TV, etc.), consume a meal prepared at home, or consume a meal in good company with friends or family. A chart is provided below that you can use to plan when you will engage in each of the three activities, and-- if applicable-- where, what, and with whom you plan to eat. Once you have done all three activities, complete the Eating Habits Strategy reflection.\*

\*If this strategy raises concerns about your eating habits or your relationship with food, you may wish to talk with a Registered Dietitian.

#### ***Reflection***

Reflect on your overall experience with the Eating Habits Strategy. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *What do “eating habits” and “relationship with food” mean to you? What “counts” as a healthy meal or a healthy food in your eyes? How important do you believe healthful eating habits are to your overall well-being? Do your actions reflect this attitude? What role does food play in your life? Is food more connected to either health or happiness for you? Has food always played this role, or did it used to play a different role? Physically and mentally, how did you feel after each of the three food-related activities during this cycle? Does food affect your energy and/ or mood? How so? Do you often prepare food at home, eat without distractions, and/ or enjoy a meal in good company? Would you like to do any of these things more often? Do you look forward to meal times? Are you able to eat when hungry without much stress, or does thinking about food occupy much of your day? Has it always been this way for you? Finally, are your eating habits something that you want to work on right now, or is there another area of self-care that needs more of your focus?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Eating Habits Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## Section Four: Mind

*"The mind is its own place and in itself, can make a Heaven of Hell,  
a Hell of Heaven." --John Milton*

Prevention and management of compassion fatigue and its negative consequences are matters of a helping professional's mental health. While each of the strategies in this guidebook ultimately contribute to better mental health, the two self-care strategies in this section will address the mind in particular. By exploring an introduction to your mind-body connection and an introduction to the practice of mindfulness, you will learn new ways of engaging your mind and caring for your mental health.

## Strategy Seven

### *Mindfulness: Introduction to the Practice*

Mindfulness, the practice of full awareness in and attention to the present moment without judgement, is associated with decreased experiences of compassion fatigue and burnout (Silver et al., 2018). The purpose of the Mindfulness Strategy is to introduce the concept of mindfulness as an effective self-care strategy to prevent and manage compassion fatigue and its negative effects. You will explore what mindfulness is, and you will be guided to experiment with it both at home, through mindful meditation, and at work. Note that the activities for Days 3 and 4 will provide mindful “thinking prompts” designed to consider throughout the work day. You will need to plan accordingly by reading these prompts before heading to work on these days.

#### **Day 1**

Today, learn about the practice of mindfulness by reading a short article, “[How to Practice Mindfulness](#),” from mindful.org (Mindful Staff, 2018). This basic introduction to the concept will lay the foundation for the rest of the activities related to this strategy. Feel free to explore other parts of the website to learn more about mindfulness, meditation, and the benefits of both. Space for any notes you may wish to make has been provided.

#### **Day 2**

Today, experiment with mindfulness during a brief mindful meditation, the “[10-Minute Nourishing Breath Meditation](#)” (Stahl & Goldstein, 2020). As you engage with this guided meditation, focus on your breath and try not to become frustrated with yourself when your mind wanders. Remember that the process of recognizing that the mind has wandered and gently drawing it back to the present moment is an important part of any mindfulness practice. Additionally, be aware that the recording used for this guided meditation has long pauses of silence, so there is no need to worry that the recording has shut off or disconnected if it has been silent for a moment.

#### **Day 3**

Today, experiment with mindfulness in a less controlled environment than yesterday’s mindful meditation. This may be challenging if this cycle is your first introduction to mindfulness, but that’s ok! This activity is not meant to be executed perfectly or meant to frustrate you, the intention is merely to show you another way mindfulness practices can be incorporated. For this work day thinking prompt, be mindful of your thoughts and emotions throughout your shift. Try to note strong feelings and negative thoughts as they arise, and focus on doing so without judging their existence. For example, if you begin to feel stressed while you are at work, take a moment to recognize that the emotion you are feeling is stress. Rather than getting upset with yourself for the fact that you are overwhelmed or flustered, try to suspend any judgments you would usually cast on yourself. Recognizing your stress without criticizing yourself for it could free up

the headspace to do something productive to manage your stress if you so choose. Use the space below to note instances during the day when you attempted to be mindful of thoughts or emotions without judgment.

### **Day 4**

Today, like yesterday, engage in a mindful thinking prompt during your workday. The focus of today's thinking prompt is your self-talk. Rather than noting thoughts and emotions in general, focus specifically on how you "talk" to and feel toward yourself throughout the day. This could range from the mental pep talk you give yourself before an important conversation with your boss to the harsh chorus of inner critics that show up when you make a mistake. Mindfully recognize, without judgment, when you are engaging in any manner of self-talk. Use the space below to note these instances.

### **Reflection**

Reflect on your overall experience with the Mindfulness Strategy. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *What intrigued you about mindfulness as you were learning about it? Had you heard of it before? In what ways was the nourishing breath meditation peaceful or enjoyable? In what ways was it challenging? Would you like to try other guided meditations such as this one? How did it feel to engage with the mindful thinking prompts on Days 3 and 4? Was it new for you to recognize your thoughts and emotions without judgement? Is this a practice you would like to become more proficient at? On Day 4 as you were mindfully aware of your self-talk, did you discover anything about the attitudes you hold toward yourself? If much of your self-talk was negative, how does your attitude toward yourself differ from your attitudes toward those you help? Could being mindfully aware of your negative self-talk allow you to reframe your attitudes to more positive self-talk? What unanswered questions do you have about mindfulness?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Mindfulness Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

## Strategy Eight

### ***Mind-Body: Introduction to the Connection***

The mind and body are inherently connected, but you may not always notice ways in which the mental state manifests through physical experiences. The purpose of the Mind-Body Strategy is to introduce the concept and to prompt you to explore your own mind-body connection. You will do so through a couple of videos and recordings that guide you to tune in to your mind and body, especially in regard to how mental experiences of stress can translate to physical symptoms. All exercises this week will take 10 minutes or less, and space will be provided each day for any notes you may wish to jot down.

#### ***Day 1***

Today, learn about the mind-body connection by watching a short video, "[Mind-Body Connection at Wildwood High](#)" (Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre, 2019). This basic introduction to the concept will lay the foundation for the rest of the activities related to this strategy. As you look toward the rest of this cycle, prepare your mind and body to try three different activities that will help you tune in to your mind-body connection.

#### ***Day 2***

Today, begin to explore your own mind-body connection by tuning in to what's going on in your body. Allow a mindful meditation, the "[10-Minute Body Scan](#)," to help you (Bayes-Fleming, 2019). You will want to lay down for this exercise. Once the recording ends, write one sentence to describe how you feel immediately after doing the body scan.

#### ***Day 3***

Today, discover where you may be holding tension or stress physically in your body. Learn to release these physical tensions, letting the video, "[How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)," guide you (Therapist Aid, 2014). Once the exercise ends, write one sentence to describe how you feel immediately after doing the progressive muscle relaxation.

#### ***Day 4***

Today, coordinate your breath with movement for a fuller experience of your mind-body connection. Follow along with the "[Mind, Body Movement for the Busy Professional](#)" video (Wisdom 2.0, 2015). A simple practice like this one can be done whenever and wherever you need a break, even at your desk at work! Once the video ends, write one sentence to describe how you feel immediately after doing the mind-body movements.

#### ***Reflection***

Reflect on your overall experience with the Mind-Body Strategy. Some questions you



may wish to consider as you write: *Had you heard of the mind-body connection before? If so, has anything changed about your understanding of it? How did the videos and recordings in this cycle help you to explore your mind-body connection? Did you discover that you were holding stress or tension in a specific area of your body? Read back through the sentences you wrote immediately after doing each of the three activities. How did it feel to tune in to specific parts of your body on Day 2? To tense and relax your muscles on Day3? To time your breath you're your movements on Day 4? How did your thoughts and physical feelings differ after each activity? How were they similar? In your daily life, do you notice times when your emotions create physical feelings or distress in your body? Describe what these experiences and connections are like for you. Would you do any of the activities in this cycle again? When might they be useful? Would you seek out activities similar to those in this cycle?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Mind-Body Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## Section Five: Relationships

*"I am building a healthy support system and learning to use it readily." --Maureen Brady*

Thus far, you've experimented with strategies that help you help yourself. Now it's time to look at ways that you can ask others to help you! The two self-care strategies in this section will address the role that healthy relationships play in your overall well-being. They will guide you to examine how asking for help through boundaries and within friendships can enhance your ability to care for yourself. It's possible that asking for help-- instead of offering it-- may be a little out of your nature, but it's important to use your support system and know that you don't have to be the only one taking care of you.

## **Strategy Nine**

### ***Self-Interview: Boundary Setting***

People who are fulfilled by helping others (or who often engage in “people pleasing” behaviors) can find themselves overextended if they never set boundaries. While your job as a helping professional often requires you to give of yourself to meet the needs of others, this does not always have to be the case in your personal relationships (or even certain aspects of your work relationships). The purpose of the Boundary Setting Strategy is to address relationships in your life where you could benefit from setting boundaries. During this cycle, you will be prompted to conduct a self-interview that will help you assess your current relationship with setting boundaries and whether or not you wish to initiate a new boundary as a means to care for yourself.

#### ***Day 1***

Today, consider your current relationship with setting boundaries that respect your needs and interests. Have you set any boundaries with a person or people in your life? Does asking others to respect your needs come naturally to you or are you more prone to accommodating others’ needs, even at the expense of your own? Can you think of a past experience where you wish you had set a boundary with someone? Write about these questions below.

#### ***Day 2***

Today, consider a current area in which you could benefit from setting or readdressing a boundary. Where are your needs unmet or being encroached upon? With whom could you set or readdress a boundary to manage this? What would you gain from setting or readdressing this boundary? For example, you may not always want to hear about others’ struggles when you are away from work, and you could ask for this by establishing a boundary with your friends that you will ask each other if it’s a good time to vent before doing so. Give yourself time to consider these questions. If you are having trouble identifying a boundary, consider speaking with a trusted friend and asking them to be honest with you. Friends wish the best for you and can often identify where others may be crossing your boundaries! Write about your discoveries below.

#### ***Day 3***

Today, consider how you would go about setting or readdressing the boundary you identified yesterday. You do not have to put this plan into action if you are uncomfortable doing so, but think about what it might look like if you did. How would you start the conversation? What would you say to help the other person understand why this is important to you? What would be required of the other person in order for them to respect this boundary? How do you think the other person might respond? What compromises could be made so that the boundary is agreeable for both parties? Answer these questions by detailing a theoretical plan below.

### Day 4

Today, read back through the theoretical plan you made yesterday for setting or readdressing a boundary. Decide if you are willing to initiate this conversation and pursue this boundary right now or not. If the answer is yes, do it! If the answer is no or at least not right now, why did you choose not to? Answer this question below.

### Reflection

Reflect on your overall experience with the Boundary Setting Strategy. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *Had you considered boundary setting a matter of self-care before this activity? Is it difficult for you to make your needs and wants heard? If so, why do you think that is? If you did pursue setting or readdressing a boundary at this time, how did it go? Was it easier or harder than you expected? How did the other person respond? If you didn't pursue a boundary at this time, is the plan you came up with on Day 3 one that you could see yourself attempting in the future? If not, what might make it more feasible for you? Do you see benefits to setting boundaries with others in your life? If so, what benefits? Finally, is setting boundaries something that you want to work on right now, or is there another area of self-care that needs more of your focus?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Boundary Setting Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## Strategy Ten

### ***Friend Interview(s): Self-Care***

While most of the strategies in this guidebook have focused on somewhat solitary activities, the benefits of having a strong social support system cannot be neglected. The Friend Interview Strategy serves two purposes. The first purpose is to do some “social self-care.” You will be asked to set aside time (lunch, coffee, Friday night beverages, etc.) this week for a conversation with a friend. At some point during this conversation, you will ask to “interview” them about their attitudes toward self-care and the practices they use for self-care. The second purpose of this activity is to get you thinking about how self-care will play a role in your life moving forward as the end of this guidebook draws near. You will tell your friend about what you’ve been learning and doing, and you will work together to generate a list of possible self-care ideas beyond what is offered in this guidebook. This will get you thinking about your self-care related goals for the future and challenge your friend to do the same. Feel free to do this activity again with a second or third friend, or to do it with a group of friends instead of one friend at a time.

### ***Activity***

First, think of a few friends you would like to connect with for this activity. Don’t neglect long-distance friends... Maybe you could video chat! Write their name(s) below. Next, reach out to at least one of them to see if they would be available sometime this week. Once you have set a date with a friend, make note of your plans below.

In advance of meeting up with your friend(s), brainstorm some questions you would like to ask them about the role of self-care in their life. For example, do they have any fun hobbies? Is exercise or cooking therapeutic for them? How often and in what ways do they *intentionally* engage in self-care? Additionally, jot down a few key points that you want to tell them about what you have been learning through this guidebook. Space is provided below.

When you meet up with your friend(s), you will want to record the self-care ideas you brainstorm so that you can refer to them during the final cycle when you make your self-care plan. Space for these notes and ideas is provided below. After you meet up with your friend(s) for a conversation about self-care, write your Friend Interview Strategy reflection!

### ***Reflection***

Reflect on your overall experience with the Friend Interview Strategy. Some questions you may wish to consider as you write: *How do your friendships and other relationships provide you with support? Do you enjoy “social self-care” like hanging out with friends, or do you unwind better with more solitary activities? Was it natural to talk about self-care with your friend(s), or was this a new topic in your friendship? How are you and your friend(s) alike when it comes to self-care? How are you different? What did you learn from your friend(s) about self-care? What do you think they learned from you? Did you talk about any ideas that you want to incorporate into your future?*

After you are done writing your reflection, return to this page to write a one-sentence takeaway about the Friend Interview Strategy and to rate it on feasibility and helpfulness. A rating of 10 means extremely feasible/ helpful, while a rating of 1 means not at all feasible/ helpful.

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

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Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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**Celebration!**

You did it! The bulk of the guidebook is DONE! Take a moment to celebrate all that you've experienced during this journey. Now that you have a variety of self-care strategies under your belt, only one cycle remains. During this final cycle, you will reminisce about your experience and set goals for your self-care plan moving forward. Consider taking a day or two of rest right now, and then move on to Part III: Reflection Cycle!

## Part III: Reflection Cycle

### Opening Words

Now it's time for the twelfth and final cycle, the Reflection Cycle! In this cycle, you will focus on the past, present, and future of what you've learned in this guidebook. You will review your past progress, reflect on your present thoughts, and finally, set self-care goals for the future. The time frame of this cycle is flexible, so feel free to spread it out as you see fit.

### Past: Progress Review

Begin by retaking the [ProQOL](#) (Stamm, 2010), which you originally took at the end of Part I. A place to record your original scores and your current scores has been provided.

	<i>Original Score</i>	<i>Current Score</i>
<i>Compassion satisfaction:</i>	_____	_____
<i>Burnout:</i>	_____	_____
<i>Secondary traumatic stress:</i>	_____	_____

Next, reminisce over the past 11 cycles by reading back through each of your reflections from Part II. As you do so, copy over each of your one-sentence takeaways and your feasibility and helpfulness ratings in the space provided below so that you can easily review them all in one place. For your reference, the reflections can be found on pages 11, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 27, 28, 32, and 33.

### Section One: Self-Awareness

#### Life Scan: Assess Your Trauma

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

#### Value Scan: Remember Your Reason

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



**Section Two: Time****When Work Ends: Transition Routine**

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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**And Play Begins: Hobby Routine**

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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**Section Three: Body****Physical Activity: Attitudes & Actions**

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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**Eating Habits: Health & Happiness**

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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**Section Four: Mind****Mindfulness: Introduction to the Practice**

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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### Mind-Body: Introduction to the Connection

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

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Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

### Section Five: Relationships

#### Self-Interview: Boundary Setting

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

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Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

#### Friend Interview(s): Self-Care

Takeaway: \_\_\_\_\_

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Feasibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

### Present: Current Thoughts

Now it's time to write about your current thoughts having recently completed and reviewed the self-care activities in Part II. Questions to get your ideas flowing are provided in clusters based on the topics of your overall experience with the guidebook, your engagement with specific self-care strategies, and your personal growth and future goals. You can choose to write about each of these clusters on separate days (three days total), or you can power straight through all of the written reflections once you get started.

#### Overall Experience

Reflect on the overall experience of working through this guidebook. Some questions to consider as you write: *Overall, how do you feel about the experience of working through this guidebook? Was it beneficial, challenging, both? Did you enjoy it? Would you do it again or recommend it to others? In what ways do you feel that the strategies you tried were of benefit to you? What was the most impactful experience you had? What was the most challenging part of the process? Was it difficult for you to stay motivated throughout this process? How did you respond if you got off track from your original timeline? Did you find that having an accountability partner positively influenced your experience and/or motivation? How so? Was it new for you to ask someone to keep*

*you accountable in this way? What did you learn about self-care that you will take with you? What do you want to remember about this experience?*

### **Specific Strategies**

Reflect on your engagement with specific strategies in the guidebook. Some questions to consider as you write: *Which strategies were your favorite? What about these strategies caused them to resonate with you? Which strategies were the most fun? What made these ones so engaging and enjoyable for you? Which strategies do you feel would be the most easily incorporated into your current routine? Which strategies were the most challenging? What made these a challenge for you in particular? Are any of the more personally challenging strategies ones that you would like to focus on moving forward, or would you rather start with small changes? Were there any strategies that you specifically disliked or that caused you undue stress? If so, which ones and why? Which strategies can you see yourself using in the future? How might you incorporate them? Which strategies would you choose to avoid in the future? Why? Of the five sections (Self-Awareness, Time, Body, Mind, and Relationships), was there a particular section of strategies that resonated most with you? Why do you think that was?*

### **Growth & Goals**

Reflect on how you have grown so far and what goals you might like to set for yourself moving forward. Some questions to consider as you write: *How did you grow during your time working through this guidebook? What from this journey are you most proud about? What did you learn about yourself that you didn't know before? Were you surprised by anything that came up? Did the process open your eyes to any areas of growth you would like to focus on moving forward? Are there any changes you could make or goals you could set that would motivate you to achieve that growth? If so, what would they be? What strategies could you see yourself using to make these changes or achieve these goals? Which self-care practices could you see yourself implementing? Is there anything from this guidebook that you feel is worth sharing with your colleagues, friends, family, etc.? If so, what is it and why? Now that you have completed this guidebook, how important do you feel that self-care will be for you going forward?*

### **Future: Self-Care Goals**

You have arrived! This is the last step of the guidebook, and yet your journey has just begun. It's time for you to take the reins now and decide what happens next. With all that you've learned in mind, how are you going to care for yourself moving forward? Set at least one self-care goal that designates how often you want to participate in a certain strategy (which could be one from this guidebook or another of your choosing). Maybe you have grand plans and you'll start a daily mindfulness practice, engage in a weekly hobby routine and body scan, and conduct a monthly life scan to assess your stressors, all while addressing more balanced eating

habits. Or maybe, you'll start small, simply focusing on the transition from work to home with a comfy pair of socks. Whatever your hopes for yourself, manifest them below. Don't forget to include an accountability plan! You'll thank me later.

**Closing Words**

I hope you have grown from this journey and that you will use what you have learned about self-care practices moving forward. You deserve the same level of compassion and kindness you so readily offer others. Take care!

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## **Appendix: Literature Review**

Intervening Against Compassion Fatigue

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### Intervening Against Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue (CF), a phenomenon reported among nurses as early as 1992 (Joinson, 1992), has now been studied in a variety of helping professions. In regard to compassion fatigue, this literature review seeks to define the problem and explore the research surrounding compassion fatigue among registered dietitians, consequences of compassion fatigue, and what can be done to reduce and/or manage compassion fatigue. Finally, conclusions will be drawn related to the need for continued study and implementation of interventions to help those who are at risk for or already suffer from compassion fatigue.

#### **Defining the Problem: Understanding CF**

Compassion fatigue is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals are at risk of experiencing due to the nature of their work and the stress, trauma, and suffering of others that they are exposed to on a daily basis (Figley, 2012). The essence of the helping professional's role involves an empathetic response to those being helped, and, though this empathy is an important part of being an effective helping professional, it is also central to helping professionals' risk for CF (Flarity et al., 2013). Characterized by symptoms of "depressed mood, feelings of fatigue, disillusionment, and worthlessness" (Zeidner, Hadar, Matthews, & Roberts, 2013), CF develops over time progressing first from compassion discomfort to compassion stress and then eventually to compassion fatigue (Coetzee & Klopper, 2010). Thus, it is also considered to be a state of decreased empathetic capacity (Adams et al., 2008).

While this sounds a lot like burnout, compassion fatigue is unique from general burnout in a variety of ways. Gallagher (2013) conceptualizes of the difference between these two notions by clarifying their separate, but related, underlying causes. Burnout, he explains, stems

from stresses associated with the helping professional's environment, while compassion fatigue has more to do with the trauma and suffering disclosed within relationships between the helping professional and their patients/clients (Gallagher, 2013).

Compassion fatigue can be further differentiated from burnout with the understanding that CF is a combination of both burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Adams et al., 2008). Considering that these concepts together make up compassion fatigue, it is important to understand how each of these concepts are defined individually. The eleventh revision of the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) defines burnout as, "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed," with the three main symptoms being, "feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism/cynicism related to one's job, and reduced professional efficiency" (World Health Organization, 2018). Meanwhile, Figley (2012) describes secondary traumatic stress (STS) as a form of traumatization incurred by hearing about a traumatic event from another rather than experiencing the trauma directly oneself. Though the trauma was not experienced directly, the negative effects can be the same as those of primary trauma including "intrusive imagery, avoidance of reminders and cues, hyperarousal, distressing emotions, and functional impairment" (Figley, 2012).

### **Registered Dietitian Nutritionists: Existing Literature Surrounding CF**

Compassion fatigue has been studied in a variety of helping professions over the last three decades, but little research exists to explore this phenomenon among registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs). Osland (2015) saw this gap in the literature and sought to determine whether RDNs, specifically those working in a variety of areas of acute care, are at risk for compassion fatigue as well. This objective was carried out by administering a version of the

Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) Scale—a validated tool used to examine compassion satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout in those at risk for compassion fatigue (Stamm, 2010)—to dietitians across Queensland, Australia. Osland (2015) also collected other information about these dietitians such as years in practice, facility size where employed, nature of workload, amount of unpaid overtime, perceived degree of workplace support, self-care education during entry level training, and utilization of self-care strategies. All in all, 87 dietitians representing thirteen different public, acute care facilities completed the survey. Statistical analysis of the ProQOL results via SPSS showed that all but two respondents reported average or high compassion satisfaction. Meanwhile, levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress were low or average among all participants. These results indicated that the RDNs surveyed experienced higher professional quality of life than other professionals that have taken the ProQOL. In analyzing the relationships between ProQOL scores and the other information collected, RDNs working in pediatric caseloads and those working in smaller facilities (<200 beds) scored significantly higher in terms of secondary traumatic stress. Both secondary traumatic stress and burnout were also significantly associated with practicing in dietetics for >5 years. Regardless of years in practice, none of the dietitians in the study reported receiving education about professional self-care strategies during their entry-level training. While this study suggests that professional quality of life is relatively high among RDNs, risk factors for lower professional quality of life (i.e. pediatric caseloads, employment at smaller facilities, and longer time practicing in the field) were identified. Additionally, a potential need for greater education about professional self-care within the dietetics profession was recognized (Osland, 2015).

An investigation into the prevalence of dietitian burnout by Gingras, de Jonge, and Purdy (2010) represents additional existing research relevant to compassion fatigue among RDNs. This study focuses on burnout in general, not compassion fatigue specifically, but it is relevant nonetheless considering the large gap in the literature on CF among RDNs. Prevalence of burnout was assessed using Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), which has shown reliability and validity for use among health professionals (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The MBI-HSS measures three subcategories of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Among the 405 dietitians who completed the survey administered by Gingras et al. (2010), the mean scores for these three subcategories represented moderate emotional exhaustion, low depersonalization, and moderate personal accomplishment. These scores represent lower levels of overall burnout among the RDNs surveyed compared to other health professions, which usually report higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as well as lower levels of personal accomplishment when assessed by the MBI-HSS. Although burnout appears to be less prevalent among dietitians than other health professions, the researchers still made recommendations for burnout awareness/prevention efforts to be present in both the education of future RDNs and in the facilities where RDNs are employed (Gingras et al., 2010).

It is important to note that both of the studies discussed above reported limitations which may cause levels of compassion fatigue and burnout to appear lower in the sample than they actually are in the population. Namely, both studies used convenience samples of registered dietitian nutritionists who volunteered to participate. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that RDNs experiencing higher levels of CF or burnout may have elected not to participate if they were already feeling overwhelmed or short on time. While both of these studies point to the

conclusion that registered dietitian nutritionists experience higher professional quality of life and lower levels of compassion fatigue and burnout than other helping professions, this does not mean that compassion fatigue is not a concern among RDNs—it only shows that CF is of greater concern among helping professions as a whole than it is specifically among RDNs.

### **Outcomes: Negative Consequences of CF**

A number of negative consequences have been associated with compassion fatigue. First and foremost, since CF is partially comprised of burnout, the well-documented consequences of burnout also result from compassion fatigue. These negative consequences include, but are not limited to, physical consequences such as prolonged fatigue, headaches, and gastrointestinal issues as well as psychological consequences such as insomnia, depressive symptoms, and other symptoms of poor psychological health. Professional outcomes, also referred to as occupational consequences, associated with burnout include job dissatisfaction and absenteeism (Salvagioni et al., 2017). A strong correlation between burnout and turnover intention (intent to leave one's current job) has also been documented (Scanlan & Still, 2019).

Due to the unique nature of compassion fatigue, however, its negative consequences extend beyond those of burnout that may be experienced in any demanding profession. Instead, CF poses more specific risks to helping professionals such as decreased feelings of compassion satisfaction (Flarity et al., 2013) and decreased empathetic capacity (Coetzee & Klopper, 2010). Udipi, Veach, Kao, and LeRoy (2008) also cite inappropriate disengagement/depersonalization from the patient/client being served as well as residual compassion stress, feelings of helplessness or ineffectiveness, traumatic recollections, nightmares related to work, and avoidance/hesitance toward unpleasant tasks or patients.

### **Exploring Interventions: What Can Be Done About CF**

**Observational studies.**

As the literature discussed above shows that compassion fatigue is a risk to the personal and professional well-being of helping professionals, it is prudent to explore the research surrounding what can be done to prevent, reduce, or manage CF. A number of observational studies explored factors that may contribute to or be protective against the development of compassion fatigue. Barnett and Ruiz (2018) found a positive association between psychological distress—as measured by the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale—and higher levels of compassion fatigue in hospice nurses. Upon further investigation, they discovered that this relationship appears to be mediated by decreased self-esteem and increased negative affect associated with psychological distress. Given their findings, the researchers conclude that promoting psychological well-being via self-care and utilization of other mental health resources may be effective strategies to prevent compassion fatigue (Barnett & Ruiz, 2018).

In accordance with Barnett and Ruiz (2018) conclusion that self-care may be effective at preventing compassion fatigue, Cuartero and Campos-Vidal (2019) studied the relationship between self-care behaviors and compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among social workers. They assessed the prevalence of CF in their sample using a version of the ProQOL, and they collected data about use of self-care behaviors such as debriefing with colleagues, leisure activities outside of work, and mindfulness-based activities, etc. Their study showed that engaging in self-care behaviors—both personal and professional—was associated with lower levels of compassion fatigue as well as higher levels of compassion satisfaction. The researchers believe strongly that this is an important area of further study, and they conclude that “supporting a culture of self-care...must become an obligation” for the entities that employ professionals who are at risk of compassion fatigue (Cuartero & Campos-Vidal, 2019).

In regard to a specific self-care behavior that may be associated with lower levels of compassion fatigue, Silver et al. (2018) conducted a cross-sectional study to examine the relationships between mindfulness and empathy, work engagement, burnout, and compassion fatigue. They surveyed over 400 genetic counselors who engage in direct clinical contact with patients, and they collected data via the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), the ProQOL, and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Positive associations between mindfulness and work engagement and empathy were found, while mindfulness was negatively associated with burnout and compassion fatigue. Based on their findings, these researchers see a need for mindfulness training as a part of either graduate level curricula or continuing education in the genetic counseling field, and they discuss other research that supports how the addition of mindfulness training could improve professional well-being and retention as well as clinical care outcomes (Silver et al., 2018).

**Experimental studies.**

In addition to observational studies about factors and practices that may mediate and/or reduce compassion fatigue, experimental studies have been done to test interventions aimed at reducing CF. One such study, a pilot investigation by Craigie et al. (2016), evaluated a Mindful Self-Care and Resiliency (MSCR) intervention among nurses in Australia. The aim of this study was to determine if mindfulness-based training is a feasible intervention to reduce CF and improve emotional well-being. The intervention involved a workshop about mindfulness and compassion fatigue resiliency followed by four, weekly skills seminars related to mindfulness. Measures related to compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction (assessed using the ProQOL); depression, anxiety, and stress; trait-negative affect (TNA); resiliency; and harmonious and obsessive passion for work were assessed by a variety of validated scales at

baseline, post-intervention, and one month out from the intervention. From baseline to the post-test, significant reductions in depression ( $p < .05$ ), burnout ( $p < .01$ ), and TNA ( $p < .05$ ) were observed. From baseline to the one-month follow-up, significant reductions in stress ( $p < .05$ ) and obsessive passion ( $p < .05$ ) were observed in addition to the significant reductions in burnout ( $p < .01$ ) and TNA ( $p < .01$ ) being maintained. Furthermore, compassion satisfaction improved significantly ( $p < .05$ ) from baseline to follow-up. While this intervention did not specifically decrease secondary traumatic stress (one aspect of compassion fatigue), significant improvements were seen in decreased burnout and other factors believed to be related to compassion fatigue. Further study of mindfulness-based interventions including a control group is recommended (Craigie et al., 2016).

Train and Butler (2013) also conducted a pilot study aimed at reducing compassion fatigue, this time using psychophonetics instead of mindfulness. Psychophonetics, a coaching methodology for self-care and empathy skills, is centered around awareness of three factors: bodily response, internal gesture, and visualization. These three factors are non-verbal modes of experience that, when brought to awareness of the practitioner, can “facilitate the movement from an unconscious, self-protective and defensive response to a prosocial empathetic response” toward the patient (Train & Butler, 2013). Participants in this small pilot test, 11 full-time home healthcare professionals working for the same organization, were trained in psychophonetics methodology during an initial two-day workshop followed by 2-hour follow-up sessions once a month for six months. The researchers evaluated their intervention by administering a version of the ProQOL before the intervention, one month after the intervention, and six months after the intervention (this represents a follow-up design similar to, but more extended than, the one used by Craigie et al. (2016)). The results of the ProQOL categories of compassion fatigue and



burnout showed no significant difference from baseline to either follow-up point, however, a significant difference was observed in mean secondary traumatic stress scores lowering from baseline to one-month follow-up ( $p = 0.0023$ ) and from baseline to six-month follow-up ( $p = 0.0193$ ) (Train & Butler, 2013). While neither compassion satisfaction nor burnout improved significantly, the statistically significant improvement in secondary traumatic stress is also clinically significant as STS is what differentiates compassion fatigue from regular burnout and may also be harder to intervene with than burnout alone.

In addition to these two pilot studies, Flarity et al. (2013) conducted an experiment among emergency department nurses to test the effectiveness of an educational program for the prevention and treatment of CF. The core of their intervention consisted of a 4-hour interactive group seminar about compassion fatigue and strategies to prevent and treat it. One of the five key focuses of this intervention was self-care, with the other four being self-regulation, intentionality, perceptual maturation/self-validated caregiving, and connection. Participants were also given access to multimedia resources about CF. Postintervention, improvements were seen in the average score on all three subscales of the ProQOL—compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress ( $p = 0.004$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and  $p = 0.001$ , respectively). Participants filled out course evaluations—allowing for the inclusion of some qualitative data—and the responses represented subjective positive outcomes with many individuals perceiving benefits from the course. The results of this study suggest that similar courses/interventions regarding compassion fatigue should be offered to in more facilities. (Flarity et al., 2013).

In looking at interventions that reduce compassion fatigue and/or increase compassion satisfaction, it is also relevant to discuss the existence of online resources to cope with CF, as these resources are what helping professionals are likely to come in contact with should they

seek help for their feelings of compassion fatigue. Many of these resources come in the form of lists of strategies. One such list, developed by Compassion Fatigue Specialist Françoise Mathieu, boasts that it is the “Top 12 Self-Care Tips for Helpers” (Mathieu, 2007). This resource is congruent with the conclusions drawn by many of the research articles discussed above that self-care can play an important role in reducing risk of CF and/or promoting resilience in the face of compassion fatigue. Some of the strategies recommended by Mathieu include taking stock of your stress, learning to ask for help, intentionally transitioning from work to home, assessing your trauma inputs, learning more about compassion fatigue, and attending regular professional development to reinvigorate your interest in your field (Mathieu, 2007).

Last but not least among interventions for those suffering from compassion fatigue, Charles Figley—pioneer and key researcher in the field of CF—used to offer web courses about compassion fatigue through the Figley Institute. One such course, *Basics of Compassion Fatigue*, had as a key objective the creation and implementation of a self-care plan (Figley, 2012). A benefit to this type of intervention is that, when the courses were still running, individuals who recognized their own risk or symptoms could seek out this guided help of their own accord rather than relying on the availability of an intervention at their place of work or the opportunity to participate in a study intervention.

Among all of these journal articles and online resources, there is a common theme of increasing awareness of compassion fatigue (Figley, 2012; Flarity et al., 2013; Train & Butler, 2013) and developing self-care (Barnett & Ruiz, 2018; Cuartero & Campos-Vidal, 2019; Figley, 2012; Mathieu, 2007; Train & Butler, 2013), often in the form of mindfulness (Craigie et al., 2016; Silver et al., 2018), as promising prevention methods and/or interventions in this condition faced by helping professionals. While research has been done in this area, all articles

recommended and stressed the importance of further study and work to decrease prevalence of compassion fatigue among helping professionals. There is a need for more wide-spread intervention to both educate helping professionals about their risk for compassion fatigue as well as help them cope with CF should they experience it.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, compassion fatigue is a state of combined burnout and secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Stamm, 2010) that should be regarded as a threat to professional well-being and retention of trained helping professionals because of its association with negative outcomes. Among registered dietitian nutritionists, compassion fatigue has not been well studied. However, the risk of CF among RDNs should not be disregarded because, as discussed by Osland (2015), dietitians are exposed to many of the same work environments, compassionate patient relationships, and emotional stressors as other professionals among whom compassion fatigue has already been documented. Due to the large number of professionals across a variety of helping disciplines who are at risk—not to mention the considerably larger number of patients who could be negatively affected by consequences related to CF in the helping professionals that serve them—compassion fatigue is an important area of ongoing study across a variety of disciplines. Effective interventions that promote personal and professional self-care and that can be feasibly offered to a widespread audience of helping professionals are of utmost importance.

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